



**Scott Brabant**  
Board Chair

**Luis B. Pérez, LCSW**  
President & CEO

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Scott Brabant and I wish to share comments in regards to **H.B. 5037 An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023, And Making Appropriations Therefor.**

I am the Board Chair of Mental Health Connecticut (MHC), a 114-year-old nonprofit, and have been a board member for seven years. I am here to express my concern on the proposed state budget and to share my perspective as a steward of MHC, an organization that continues to demonstrate its value through excellent delivery of high-quality mental health services and supports. Connecticut's community nonprofits provide a wide range of behavioral, developmental, community justice and other human services to thousands of people across the state every day and are the backbone of the state's safety net.

I am grateful for the funding increase received in 2021. This was a great first step in restoring approximately \$461 million lost over five years for community nonprofits; however, there needs to be a more aggressive, systemic correction for future funding not only in terms of the quantity of dollars available, but how funds are made available as well. Funding support needs to not only keep pace with inflation but ensure organizations like MHC can retain and attract qualified staff. The demand for such staff is at a premium and community organizations struggle to retain simply because it cannot keep pace with lower-level positions that pay more. Further, organizations like MHC should have the ability to retain funds received, not return, if it consistently demonstrates positive measurable outcomes for its program participants. While the governor's budget proposal targets some new initiatives, it doesn't address the underfunding of the statewide network of community nonprofits that are struggling to continue to operate.

MHC supports the Governor's initiatives to make behavioral health a priority. We support legislation and budget support aimed at increasing access to care, challenging stigma and discrimination, encouraging preventative care, and elevating mental wellness to the same level of priority as physical wellness. We need to finish what we started with health insurance parity. You need to enforce the CT Parity Law passed in 2019 and hold private insurers accountable. We ask that you use evidenced based practices such as Peer Support to become an essential part of Connecticut's mental health workforce. We also ask that you codify telehealth as a permanent part of health care delivery.

Without continuing attention paid to the ongoing severe funding gap, however, I am troubled for our future. I am concerned that if funding levels are not restored and keep pace with inflation moving forward, that MHC will have difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff, ensuring safe and secure environments for services, and meeting the basic needs of our program participants so they can continue to stay on the path of their recovery journey.

In the business world, there are fundamental factors that must be accounted for in a budget. From the cost of inflation and facilities upkeep to investing in human resources to ensure employee retention is a top priority. MHC, like all community-based non-profits must also be run like a business.

Funding MHC, and our fellow non-profits, is an investment in the State of Connecticut that we can no longer afford to ignore. I hope you will agree that investing in our friends and neighbors is vital to the health and future of our great state of Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,  
Scott Brabant  
Board Chair  
Mental Health Connecticut